Alyssa Butova <abutova@colchesterct.org>

[BOE] Proposal for Later School Start Times

2 messages

Bethany Ciullo <bethany.ciullo@gmail.com> Fri, Nov 7, 2025 at 10:06 AM
To: boe@colchesterct.org

To the Colchester Board of Education:

Good morning, and I hope you are well!

I am writing to propose a later start time to William J. Johnston Middle School and Bacon Academy in Colchester, CT. Ideally, this could be a statewide proposal.

With respective start times of 7:18am and 7:35am, Colchester is among the earliest school start times in the nation, which negatively impacts students' academic performance, physical well-being, and psychological health, as evidenced by the CDC.

Numerous scientific and data-backed reports have researched and found the following:

- "Insufficient sleep in adolescents has been shown to be associated with a wide variety of adverse outcomes, from poor mental and physical health to behavioral problems and lower academic grades." –NLM
- "Later start times also generally correspond to improved attendance, less tardiness, less falling asleep in class, better grades, and fewer motor vehicle crashes." –NLM
- "Research from psychologists and others indicates that later school times correlate with more sleep, better academic performance, and myriad mental and physical health benefits." –APA
- "One meta-analysis found that compared with students whose schools started between 8 a.m. and 8:29 a.m., those in schools starting between 8:30 a.m. and 8:59 a.m. had longer sleep duration, less negative mood, and better developmental outcomes including socioemotional health, cognitive development, behavioral health, and physical health (*Pediatrics*, Vol. 149, No. 6, 2022)." –APA
- "[A] review found later start times were correlated with better attendance, less tardiness, less falling asleep in class, better grades, and fewer car crashes (Wheaton, A. G., et al., *Journal of School Health*, Vol. 86, No. 5, 2016)." –APA
- "Meltzer and Wahlstrom found that after new school start times were implemented in a large suburban district near Denver, more parents of middle and high school students reported sufficient sleep duration, and fewer reported feeling tired (*Sleep Health*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2022)." –APA
- "Middle and high school teachers reported later wake times, increased sleep duration, and improved daytime functioning (*Journal of School Health*, Vol. 93, No. 2, 2022)." –APA
- "Later start times haven't been found to significantly interfere with teens participating in extracurricular activities or holding after-school jobs (*Frontiers in Sleep*, Vol. 1, No. 1044457, 2022)." –APA

- “The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends that middle schools and high schools should start at 8:30 a.m. or later to support teen health, alertness and safety.” –AASM

- “A previous data analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention […] found that the percentage of students who reported feeling too sleepy to do their homework declined after the school start time delay from 46% to 35% among middle school students and from 71% to 56% among high school students. Scores on a measure of academic engagement were significantly higher after the start time change for both middle school and high school students.” –AASM

- “Impact of Changing School Start Times on Teachers/Staff […] found significant benefits of later school start times for middle and high school teachers and school-based staff. They reported increased sleep duration due to later wake times, as well as improvements in daytime functioning.” –AASM

- “The American Academy of Pediatrics recommended in 2014 that middle and high schools begin instruction no earlier than 8:30 a.m., though most U.S. high schools start the day before then. In 2018, California lawmakers nearly enacted a measure that would ban most high schools from starting class before 8:30 a.m.” –University of Washington

- “The results from this three-year research study, conducted with over 9,000 students in eight public high schools in three states, reveal that high schools that start at 8:30 AM or later allow for more than 60% of students to obtain at least eight hours of sleep per school night. Teens getting less than eight hours of sleep reported significantly higher depression symptoms, greater use of caffeine, and are at greater risk for making poor choices for substance use. Academic performance outcomes, including grades earned in core subject areas of math, English, science and social studies, plus performance on state and national achievement tests, attendance rates and reduced tardiness show significantly positive improvement with the later start times of 8:35 AM or later. Finally, the number of car crashes for teen drivers from 16 to 18 years of age was significantly reduced by 70% when a school shifted start times from 7:35 AM to 8:55 AM.” –University of Minnesota

Since Connecticut is an educational leader in the nation, I wish to continue that leadership by prioritizing the mental and physical welfare of our youth.

I thank you greatly for your time!

All the best,
Bethany Ciullo

Sources:
https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/32753
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https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4824552/
https://www.apa.org/topics/children/school-start-times
https://aasm.org/later-school-start-times-study/
https://academic.oup.com/sleep/article-abstract/42/Supplement_1/A85/5450865
https://www.washington.edu/news/2018/12/12/high-school-start-times-study/
https://conservancy.umn.edu/items/81f84856-ad21-4a04-a99c-3e9de4213521

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dantonacci@colchesterct.org <dantonacci@colchesterct.org> Fri, Nov 7, 2025 at 2:27 PM

To: Bethany Ciullo <bethany.ciullo@gmail.com>, boe@colchesterct.org

Bethany,

My term as Board Chair is expiring, but this seems like a great topic for the Colchester BOE to explore. The next BOE meeting is November 18th at 6pm in the WJJMS black box room. There is public comment section at the beginning of each meeting where it would be nice if you could expand on what you have written here. Your letter would be in the Board packet under correspondence as well. Do you think you can come?

~

Donna Antonacci
860-373-8926
Colchester BOE Chair

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